

are currently working on a bipartisan package of legislation that we intend to have designed to improve the foster care system: Expecting more educational stability and high school completion for foster children, improving health outcomes, keeping siblings together, and extending and improving a current incentive program that rewards States for increasing adoptions. These legislative changes would implement many of the recommendations our subcommittee has heard for improving the lives of children in foster care. But even with these improvements, the tens of thousands of dedicated foster parents and those who support them will continue to remain the backbone of our foster care system. On our Nation's effort to support children who cannot safely live with their own parents, we owe them our thanks and our continued support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge an "aye" vote for this important resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 1185.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleague, Mr. MCDERMOTT, and urge the support of H. Res. 1185. Since being elected to public office, I have been in advocate for children in foster care; in part because 8 years ago my wife and I adopted two of our children from foster care.

As a result, we became intimately aware of the status of America's foster care system. This resolution commends the hard work and sacrifice of the thousands of American families who care for foster children. As an adoptive foster parent, I know the joy these children bring. I also know that caring for children who, in some cases, have survived atrocious abuse and neglect can be extremely challenging. Many foster parents open their hearts and homes to children with the trauma and pain of a broken past. Many times these caregivers receive little or no support from the Federal government as they take in our Nation's most vulnerable young people.

Despite record food prices, foster families across America stretch their budgets to feed additional children that they have welcomed into their homes. Despite rising gas prices; foster families do their best to drive children to schools, take them to doctor's appointments, and attend little league games—because they know that's the kind of support these children have never had. They do a great service for America, Mr. Speaker, and deserve to be commended for their efforts.

While we recognize and commend their service, we need to do more to ensure a better future for these children when they leave foster homes. We need to do more to heal the minds and bodies of these children, so that the investment that foster parents have made in their lives is not lost to homelessness, drug addiction, and gang involvement that so many

of these children turn to when they are abandoned again as they exit foster care.

The public may not be aware that on the night of their 18th birthday, most states terminate all services for foster children. Parents know that most children in our society are not self-sufficient the day they turn 18. For example: we don't expect our children to afford health coverage when they turn 18. In fact, most parents retain their children under a family policy until age 23. Yet for the 26,000 vulnerable young Americans who age out of the foster care system, we eliminate their healthcare coverage the moment they turn 18. Mr. Speaker, we need to do better. We need to extend healthcare coverage for children in foster care to age 21. The pathway to extend coverage already exists in current law, but only 17 states have implemented this option and I believe it is a moral and societal imperative to make this the standard across our Nation. Without proper healthcare many of these youth end up another sad statistic.

I know my good friend from Washington, Mr. MCDERMOTT, and I see eye-to-eye on this issue. Both he and I have introduced legislation that would make these necessary changes to healthcare coverage for foster children. Mr. Speaker, I urge the rest of my colleagues to support this resolution and to do better for America's foster children.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, according to 2006 data, nationally, 799,000 children have spent at least 24 hours in foster care and, on any given day, roughly 510,000 children were in the Nation's foster care system. In Nevada, there are currently 5,450 children receiving foster care, including 3,947 in Clark County.

My district has faced some unique challenges recently. As Southern Nevadans, we recognize the need for a nurturing environment when biological parents abuse or neglect their own children. Foster families graciously open their doors, and offer love and guidance in the most difficult of circumstances. It is critical we honor these unsung heroes.

I would like to thank Chairman MCDERMOTT for introducing this bipartisan legislation honoring the selfless service of foster families recognizing the critical role these individuals play in communities across the nation. In addition, the resolution will mark May as National Foster Care Month. I encourage all of my colleagues to support the generosity of foster parents in their districts and throughout the nation during the month of May.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1185.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the

following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 3035. An act to temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965.

SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING FORMER FOSTER CARE YOUTH

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1208) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that youth who age out of foster care should be given special care and attention.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1208

Whereas 12,000,000 Americans spend time in foster care;

Whereas every year, more than 24,000 youth turn age 18 while in foster care;

Whereas the safekeeping of most youth who age out of foster care is the responsibility of the State governments, which receive Federal funding to assist them in doing so;

Whereas family reunification, kinship care, and adoption are the preferred solutions for children who are placed in foster care;

Whereas Congress created a new Independent Living initiative in 1986, and expanded the program by passing the Chaffee Foster Care Independence Act in 1999 to assist youth who are emancipated while in foster care: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports former foster care youth as they overcome many emotional, physical, and social obstacles in the pursuit of healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives;

(2) recognizes former foster care youth organizations for their dedication to reforming and improving the foster care system;

(3) appreciates individuals, mentors, and social workers who provide assistance to former foster care youth beyond resources available through Federal, State, and local services; and

(4) encourages reviews of Federal and State programs conducted under title IV of the Social Security Act that would improve services to help former foster care youth succeed in their transition to adulthood and independence.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 1208.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today to ask my colleagues to support House Resolution 1208. This